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Contributed Notes.

ŠEVÂ AND ḤÂṬĒPH.

In an article published last year "On the Etymology of the Term Ševâ"¹ I have shown that Ḥaṭeph is the older name of the two and that it meant originally only vocal ševâ. I believe I am able now to throw more light on the subject. We have three systems of Hebrew vocalization: the earliest, the Palestinean lately discovered by Dr. Friedländer;² a later system, the Babylonian, discovered within the last half century; and the latest, the received Tiberian system. Each of the two last systems meant to improve on its predecessor, among other points, also with regard to the denotation of ševâ. The Palestinean system had no sign for ševâ; silent ševâ it did not mark at all, vocal ševâ it denoted by one of the short vowels, *i*, *e*, *a*. The Babylonian system improved upon its predecessor by introducing a sign for vocal ševâ. This sign is a horizontal line. The Tiberian system has improved upon its predecessor by introducing a sign also for silent ševâ, probably under the influence of the Arabic, and changing the horizontal line to a double point.

Since Luzzatto it is a recognized fact that the Hebrew vowel-system is based on that of the Syriac, and we shall not go amiss if we recognize in the ševâ sign of the Babylonian system the Syriac ܥܬܐ, and in the name חטף, or חטף as Baer vocalizes it, a direct translation of that Syriac term. In the Babylonian system the *marheṭânâ* sign has been adopted to denote *rāphè*, *i. e.*, the loss of doubling or of pronunciation (as in ח), and a new sign had to be introduced for ševâ, a double point. This sign seems to have been taken from the Syriac ܥܬܐ. Whether the term ševâ is etymologically identical with this Syriac term, as Luzzatto maintains,³ or is a translation of the Arabic سكون as I tried to show,⁴ or the two names שוא, שבא, are etymologically different as Halévy maintains,⁵ one thing seems certain, that חטף belongs to the Babylonian system, while ševâ is characteristic of the Tiberian system. Considering that in Sa'adya's time (892-941?), the term ševâ was not yet generally known,⁶ the Tiberian system cannot be much

¹ *AJPh.*, XVI., pp. 28-37.

² *JQR.*, VII., April 1895; *Expositor*, March 1896.

³ *Prolegomeni*, p. 16; אגרות שד"ל, p. 331.

⁴ *AJPh.*, XVI., 34.

⁵ מחברת, p. 72.

⁶ *Comment. sur le Livre de la Création*, Arabic part, p. 79.

older than Sa'adya's time. I take this opportunity to add to my article on ševâ, quoted above, an additional number of references to the spelling שבא and some more guesses at its etymology. שבא is found in an unknown grammarian quoted by Poznańsky in his work on Chiquitilla, p. 136; in an anonymous commentary on Canticles, published by Mathews in the festive publication published in honor of Dr. Steinschneider, Hebrew part, p. 167; in Goldberg's מננוי ישראל בפריש, pp. 51, 54; in David Qimḥi's *Commentary on Psalms*, ed. by Schiller-Szinessy, chs. 9:1, 34:22, 23, and in his Dictionary, s. v. אמן; in RAbD's commentary on יצירה ס' Mishna 3; in the commentary אוצר ה' on the same work, ch. 1, Mishna 2; in Elia Wilna's commentary on the same, ch. 1, Mishna 1, אופן 3, and ch. 2, Mishna 6 in his לקושים, p. 46 b of the Warsaw edition; in RSbZ Duran's מנן אבות, IV., 13; in Abrabanel quoted by Ugeda in מדרש שמואל to I., 3; in Chiquitilla's גנת אגוז quoted by Buxtorp in his *Tractatus de Punct.*, p. 61, and in the biblical commentary אורה החיים quoted in החוקר I., 20.

Loescher (*De Causis Linguae Ebraeae*, p. 319) quotes the following in explanation of the term ševâ: Primae classis assertores nomen hoc derivant a שווא *vanitas*, quippe cum sonus hujus puncti omnium vanissimus sit, levissimeque transeat. Alterius ordinis patroni vocem deducunt a radice שוה aequalitatem [read: aequalitatem] designante, monentque, Scheva aequaliter se ad omnes habere vocales et de omnium sono participare posse, nunquam vero pondus aliquot praevalens accipere, neque adeo accentum sustinere. Tertiae seriei defensores vocem istam a שוב derivant, et Chaldaicae fere formationis esse putant, rationem vero etymologiae hanc reddunt, quod Scheva syllabam compositam ad sua initia reducat.

C. LEVIAS.